FALL BOOKS

The Commonweal

October 26, 1951

The Religious Novel

Martin Turnell

Saint of the Churchless

H. A. Reinhold

The Kemritz Case

Norbert Muhlen

Volume LV **15c** *Number 3*

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We Ought To Be Happy

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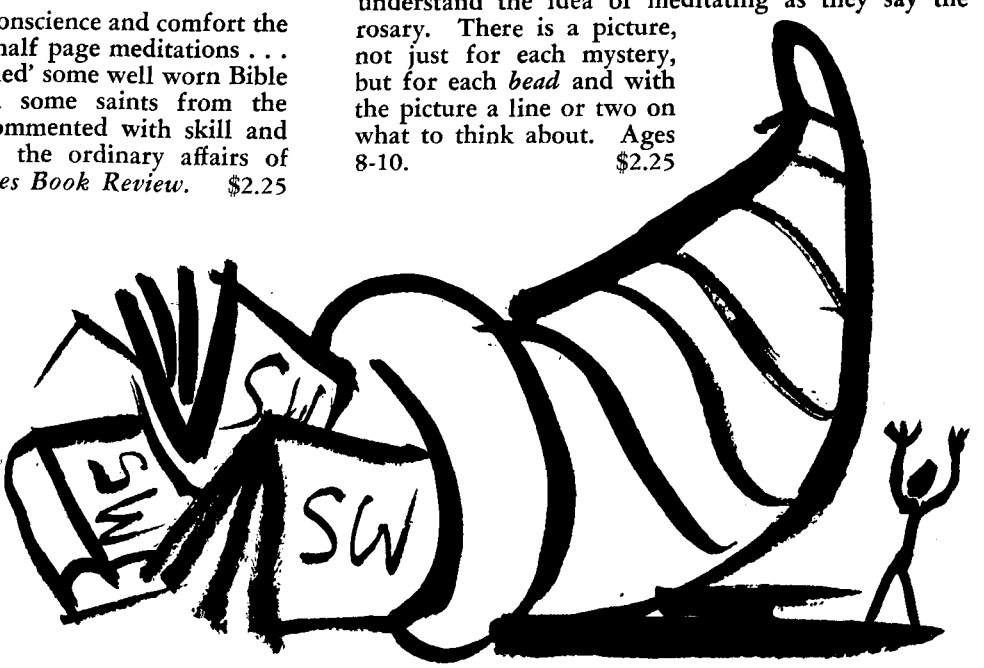

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

Power Vacuums

IT APPEARS that the United States is being called upon to redress in some fashion the power balance in the Near East and North Africa. With the British expelled from Iran and ordered out of Egypt, Iraq has called its whole treaty relations with Britain into question. Meanwhile the Moslems in North Africa are intent on overthrowing their French masters.

This revolt has been encouraged by the native ruling classes to draw attention away from their own exploitation, callousness and corruption, but it has now attained terrifying momentum. As resentment against social injustice and unrelieved misery increases, it will inevitably turn against the very men who have been enkindling passions against colonial rule. Chaos will then ensue; the Soviets will have their big chance.

In the Far East many facets of the situation are quite comparable. For years the poverty of the masses has been appalling; both regions are economically underdeveloped; the colonial powers also failed to prepare native managers and government administrators for eventual self-rule. Finally, in the Moslem, Hindu and Buddhist worlds, religious observances play a much more important role in man's daily life than they do in the West.

What resources of the United States can be brought into play at this desperate pass? There are few doubts about our technical competence. We have experience, ingenuity and know-how to burn. There are American machines and machine tools aplenty. America, for all our fatal auto accidents and unwholesome diet, is a land of good health and long life. We have much knowledge to hand on.

With such institutions as the minimum wage, strong labor unions and social security we have much to teach other peoples in the matter of industrial relations. There are one-party Southern states, machine-ridden Northern cities and disquieting evidences of political corruption, but much about the workings of our political democracy has proved its worth in the preservation of human freedoms. Perhaps nowhere else on the globe is wealth better distributed, does a greater atmosphere of plenty and personal freedom prevail.

In time it would be possible to bring many of these blessings to Africa, Asia and the Far East if the American people should develop an adequate degree of determination. It would require a heavy investment of wealth and personnel. The stumbling blocks, however, are many. In former colonial areas distrust of the white man is at its peak. While hunger, nakedness and lack of shelter serve as a powerful goad to the native masses, the values cherished by a secular civilization such as ours in themselves exert little power of attraction for the tradition-bound and religion-conscious people of the East.

In Europe, the third zone where there is danger of a power vacuum, hesitation about adopting an American type of civilization has been explicitly spelled out. There is our obsession with size, speed and the latest models. There is our cult of comfort. Europeans have some idea of the limited content of our movies, slick magazines, radio broadcasts and TV programs. They are aware of our restlessness, our urge to be ever on the move, which has resulted in good moderate-priced cars and an excellent highway system. They are aware of the bad effects of mass production. They consider childish our spectator-interest in big-time sports.

BUT East and West, the thing that disturbs people most about America is our diffidence toward ideas, our lack of a philosophy. This blinds our fellow-men to the solid values this country does produce. It creates the feeling that in a heavily armed and divided world the United States represents nothing so much as power without direction—as frightening a reali-

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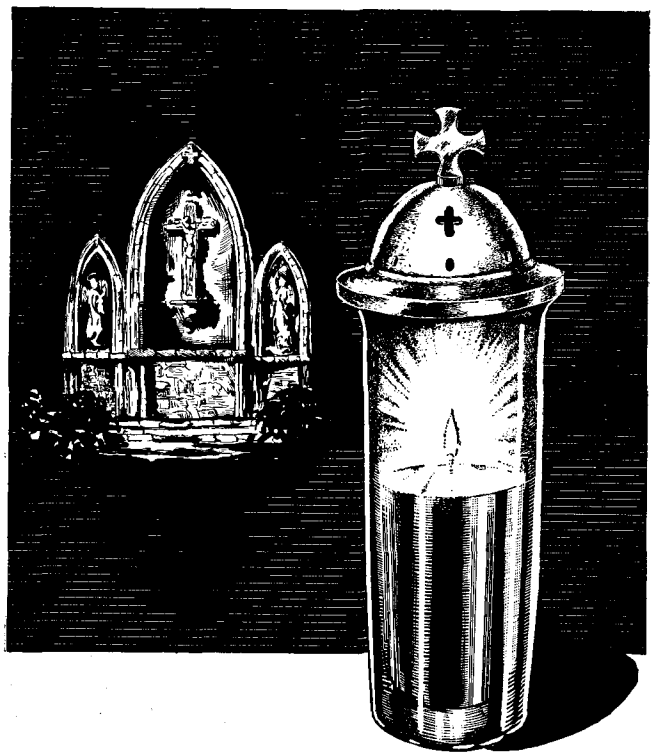

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zation as that of Soviet Russia's possession of the atomic bomb.

Since at this turning point in world history most Americans live very close to the surface of things, there would be greater hope if increasing numbers of our fellow-countrymen left the busy side of commerce, government and recreation to others. Quiet, a periodic insulation from the daily bustle, study, meditation are what those who would be leading or representative Americans most urgently need. It is the inner self that must be nurtured. Only when we have leaders of more marked interior training and disposition will America win due respect from other peoples and be able to assume a role in the world commensurate with her productive strength.

The McCarthy Question

THERE are two clear images of Senator Joe McCarthy in the public mind and several shadings in between. For a simple summation of one view of the Senator a few sentences in the current issue of the *Sign,* popular Catholic monthly, suffice admirably.

"You have to hand it to the pseudo liberals;" a *Sign* editorial reads, "when their toes are stepped upon, they can give a most unholy yell. Senator Joe McCarthy from Wisconsin has certainly found this out. He stumbled upon the Leftist nest in a speech he gave in Wheeling, W. Va., and ever since has doggedly tried to carry through the unmasking of Leftists in the State Department. Despite Alger Hiss, the pathetic Remington, and the sworn statements of Louis Budenz and Elizabeth Bentley that Owen Lattimore is a Red, the Administration still ignores the whole mess and is doing its level best to make McCarthy the prime victim of what they call McCarthyism."

This is certainly a touchingly uncomplicated version of the whole McCarthy problem, but it accurately depicts the image of fighting Joe McCarthy which still survives in many minds. Here you have McCarthy, the dauntless seeker-out of subversion, the savior of Church and State from the machinations of Reds and "pseudo liberals," the innocent victim of slander, the scourge of a stubbornly blind Administration; Joe McCarthy, the martyr, the hero, the all-American kid.

This is the McCarthy who was invited to address the Catholic Press Association convention of last year, who was vigorously hailed by the assembled journalists throughout his speech, and smiled warmly and modestly as the Catholic editors passed up to the speakers' table to receive from his own hand copies of the "secret files" he was distributing that evening. The files proved to be something less than was expected but not the Senator, who pleaded eloquently for help in his godly, patriotic crusade.

The other clear image of McCarthy was shaped by Francis Downing in these pages last November when he wrote: "The voice of McCarthy was abroad in the land and it was now as it was in the beginning a poisoned and fearful thing. It went on forever making unproved charges, forever irresponsible, forever merely free of libel; it went on exploiting the insecure, the anxious, the confused and the afraid . . . it went on, the voice, and it harassed the discontent, and it assigned guilt, and it called names, and it laid the blame; and it talked to the emotions, and it was like balm and it assuaged. . . . We have known demagogues in our political history, but this is a special kind—an evil kind, a deliberate kind, it adds falseness to the already false. . . ."

Between these two views of McCarthy was the "What Makes Sammy Run?" case book character of the New York *Post* and Madison, Wisconsin *Times Capital* series on the Senator: an insecure mediocrity with a drive for power who seized on the burning issue of the day and managed skillfully, almost innocently, to identify himself in the public mind with work he never did; a man whose hold on reality is so slight that he finds it hard to distinguish between truth and falsehood and usually doesn't succeed.

Another in-between image is that of the hard-boiled fighting ex-Marine who doesn't worry too much about the means he uses in his just war. McCarthy gets a little rough at times, maybe; but, by George, he does get things done—didn't he wake up the country to the danger of Reds in government and smoke out the subversives? If a few innocent people suffer along the way, or if the moral tone of the Senate is lowered somewhat in the process, well, that's just too bad. But McCarthy's fight isn't a tea party.

This argument is short on facts about McCarthy's crusade and long on generalities. But even granted that the crusade has accomplished all that is claimed for it (it hasn't) it is still shockingly akin to the old defense of the Communists: "You have to break a few eggs to make an omelet." Still it explains, and justifies, McCarthyism for many.

A final attitude toward the Senator is expressed

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in the cold-blooded appraisal of some of his Republican confreres who play footsie with him and his methods. As long as McCarthyism means votes, they will string along with Joe; as soon as enough people catch on, the Senator can expect to taste ice.

There no longer seems to be any excuse for intelligent Americans, especially journalists, to nurture any illusions about the Senator. The record of his reckless accusations, his evasions and half truths, his shady methods, his contempt for the processes of law and for the safeguards of civil rights is no secret. What has to be decided now is whether the value of McCarthy to the Senate and the nation is worth the price of McCarthyism; or, to put it in terms familiar to our contemporaries in Catholic journalism, whether the ends justify the means.

Useless War?

SENATOR TAFT has lately repeated an earlier statement of his to the effect that the Korean war is an "utterly useless war." He feels that, so far as this country is concerned, a war is worthwhile only if there is a "direct threat to the liberty of the American people." In his opinion, there is no such threat in Korea.

When he uses the term "direct threat," it is hardly likely that Mr. Taft means to suggest that we should hold our fire until the enemy appears off the coast of California. So the question is, What in this day and age is a direct threat to the liberty of the American people? It is not a new question. When Mussolini attacked Ethiopia and when Hitler attacked Czechoslovakia, the same question arose and we answered it then in the same way that Senator Taft would have us answer it today in Korea. We held aloof from what we chose to think of as indirect threats. We waited for Pearl Harbor.

When the attack came in Korea, we could, of course, have held aloof again. We could have waited for World War III. But instead, we tried to profit by our former mistake; along with the great majority of nations, we tried to make collective security stand as a firm, protective wall against the oncoming, world-wide Russian aggression and, ultimately, against an oncoming World War III. We abandoned the idea of the indirect threat. We concentrated on preventing the direct threat, World War III, and that is the threat we are trying to meet right now in Korea.

The issue is still in doubt. It may be that the United Nations will have successfully bought its life with the blood of the men who have died in Korea, and that it will go on, slowly perhaps, to realize the high hopes we have placed in the idea of collective security. We have had to place our hopes in collective security, because the alternative is obvious, grim and impossible: to police the world alone.

Senator Taft, it is true, has never appeared to place much hope in the idea of collective security or in the United Nations. Many of his countrymen, Catholics included, share his views, and some of them make a practice of ridiculing the UN as the height of nonsense, or globaloney.

Certainly the UN is not now a full-grown, confident, democratic organization exercising effective authority over an international community of nations. The political, philosophical and religious differences standing in the way of such a thing are indeed formidable, but the most discouraging thing of all is that so many Americans have not the will to try to overcome these differences, to set themselves straight on the course toward collective security, toward the goal of an international community of nations, and not to give up until those ideals are realized. No doubt the difficulties are enormous. But we will never get there unless we have the will to get there, unless we can see Korea as a tragic but necessary step on the road to the international community of the future. We will never reach this goal of ours unless we can see that the Korean war, far from being useless, is a fight to save collective civilization from atomic disaster.

Speaking of such a society of nations, Don Sturzo has said that "the root of the matter is that there exists in nature and according to nature an international community, and that such a community, however potentially, imperfectly and tentatively, has always existed. . . ." It exists today—potentially, imperfectly and tentatively—in the United Nations. It is up to us to bring it to maturity. It is up to us to see that those who have died in Korea have not died in vain.

One would think that Catholics, rather than abusing the UN, would take as their own the ideal Jacques Maritain has expressed: "As formerly, when the Church contributed, after the medieval fashion, to the political molding of Europe, it seems that today she is aware of her duty to contribute, after the fashion of our modern age, and thanks to the moral authority which is everywhere recognized as being hers, to the salvation of our threatened civilization, to the social shaping of the world and the advent of a new order."

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The Religious Novel

Notes on the necessary balance between 'the man who believes' and 'the man who writes.'

By MARTIN TURNELL

ON OCTOBER 30th, 1929, André Gide finished reading Claudel's *Soulier de Satin* and recorded his opinion of it in his diary. "I am filled with consternation," he said. "I find it difficult to believe that in any other religion Claudel's faults would have flourished with the same ease as in Catholicism."

It is an observation that we should do well to ponder. It is commonly assumed that religious belief is a help to a writer, but we need to be clear about the exact nature of the help and about the meaning of the term 'religious writer.' A religious writer does not necessarily write about monks and nuns or about what are loosely called 'religious subjects.' He is simply a writer whose vision is informed by definite beliefs. He has behind him a system which regards the individual as a soul to be saved or lost and which attaches immense importance to his least actions. He can never treat humanity as a herd of rutting animals like the characters in Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*.

We must remember, however, that the value of a novel is determined by the writer's literary talent and that belief can never be a substitute for it. A successful religious novel depends on a very delicate balance between the man who believes and the man who writes. When the balance is achieved his talent will be enhanced; but it is only honest to admit that the contrary is true and that belief may well destroy talent. Maritain once remarked that "to have been written as it should have been written, the work of Proust would have needed the inner light of an Augustine." What we cannot say is that even if Proust had possessed the inner light of an Augustine, his book would have been written "as it should have been written." It seems to me to be doubtful whether it would have been written at all. Nor must we forget that some novelists have left the Church and written excellent books about their defection like Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, while others have entered it and signalled their arrival by a disastrous book or have stopped writing altogether.

MARTIN TURNELL is an English critic whose work has appeared in the major literary reviews. He is the author of The Novel in France.

The contemporary religious novel cannot be studied in isolation. It is the fruit of a long period of evolution which reaches back to the Middle Ages. We do not expect novelists living in times of stress to possess the serene untroubled vision of a Dante or a Chaucer. A writer is not a disembodied intelligence imposing beliefs on experience. He offers us an imaginative interpretation of experience in which intelligence and sensibility have a part to play. The atmosphere of the age is reflected in his sensibility—his mode of feeling—which is or should be molded by his beliefs. The balance between 'the man who believes' and 'the man who writes' therefore resolves itself into a balance between the writer's intelligence and his sensibility. What I want to discuss here is the precise effect of the religious element on the sensibility of certain contemporary novelists.

★

THE religious novelist lives in a world in which salvation and damnation are a constant possibility, in which good and evil, sin and temptation are realities. This gives him greater depth and seriousness than the secular novelist, but it also creates peculiar difficulties. The novelist is seldom happy in describing saints because he cannot see the saint from inside and he is scarcely more successful in writing about the soul's relation with God. Bernanos' *Diary of a Country Priest* is in many ways an excellent novel, but it seems to me to go to pieces in the end, and M. Mauriac's novels lose their interest when the seductions are over and the conversions begin. The novelist is inclined for these reasons to choose the line of least resistance and to confine himself to a field where he thinks that he can speak with some authority. This is how M. Mauriac describes his vocation:

> I am a metaphysician who works in the concrete. Thanks to a certain gift of atmosphere, I try to make sensible and tangible, I try to give the smell of the Catholic universe of evil. I make incarnate that sinner of whom the theologians give us an abstract idea. . . .
>
> Often, impressed by my critics, I have dreamt of writing the story of a saintly little girl, a sister of Thérèse Martin . . . but as soon as I set to work, everything takes on the color which is my

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eternal color. My finest characters become enveloped in a sulphurous light which is proper to me, which I do not defend and which is simply mine.

It is right in speaking of Mauriac to begin by paying tribute to his extreme accomplishment, to his narrative gift, to his sense of style and to the dry gritty poetry which he succeeds in extracting from his native *landes*. Yet we cannot help feeling that his vision is partial and incomplete, that it is largely determined by personal factors. "The reason why I have known people who have lost their faith," he writes in *God and Mammon,* "is because a troubled conscience like mine finds satisfaction in trouble and thus attracts and seeks out similar sorts of consciences."

I think these passages illustrate what is meant by taking 'the line of least resistance.' M. Mauriac cannot escape the charge of being something of a professional *tourmenté* who uses his characters as projections of his own spiritual unrest and who is most at home in 'the Catholic universe of evil' precisely because it is the most fruitful breeding ground for unrest and troubled consciences. "I always make a mess of my virtuous characters," he remarks with truth. If the sinner occupies a privileged place in his world, it is because the sinner is the supreme example of the *tourmenté*. For the sinner—particularly the sexual sinner—there is always hope; but there is no hope at all for the fat greedy bourgeois or the decaying aristocracy who under cover of religion care only for their property and the yield of their vineyards.

"We ought," says a character in Mauriac's latest novel, *Le Sagouin* (The Slut), "we ought to be able to speak of 'making hate' as we speak of 'making love'." "This is a record of hate far more than of love," says the narrator in Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair.* It is impossible not to be struck by the vast place occupied by hate and the tiny place reserved for charity in the work of contemporary Catholic novelists. "What I detested beyond everything," says Louis of his pious family in *Noeud de vipères* . . . "was this crude caricature [of Christianity], this mediocre infusion of Christian life. I had pretended to see in it the authentic representation of Christianity in order to have the right to hate it."

That is the crucial point. They seek not the good points, the redeeming features of their neighbors, but something that will give them *the right to hate,* the right to exercise that passion which is the most destructive of all human passions and which becomes an excuse for exploiting all the other deadly sins. Once he has conjured up the horrors, the novelist dwells on them with savage glee. In *Les Anges noirs* he records the disintegration of the wretched harlot who has kept Gradère: "Her broad pasty face was painted without being washed. In the stratifications of her make-up her eyes gleamed, troubled and watery. A line of fuschia red marked the place of the split which was her mouth."

Then he turns on the silly aging husband who has married Gradère's girl on the rebound. His weak spot is his incompetence in bed: "He was perpetually conscious of the humiliation of failures and his miserable successes."

M. Mauriac has told us in *God and Mammon* that his masters were Dostoievsky and Balzac. It is an interesting admission. He has, indeed, some of Balzac's peculiar limitations. His characters like Balzac's are usually people with obsessions and he reveals the same restricted range of interests. The staple of his work is hatred, lust, avarice and a curious gloomy religion. The comparison with Dostoievsky is less flattering. The French admire the Russian writer for his insight into the dark places—the *abîmes*—of the soul. It is here that in the last resort Mauriac seems to me to fail. For it is the excessive blackness of certain sides of the picture which creates the illusion of greater penetration and a greater degree of insight than is in fact there.

★

GRAHAM GREENE'S work bears a superficial resemblance to Mauriac's—they have written flattering essays about one another—but the differences are more striking and more important. It must be remembered that Mr. Greene is a convert writing in a society where Catholics are in a minority and he does his best to accentuate the rootlessness of the individual. There is nothing in his work that is comparable to Mauriac's Gascony. Ida Arnold in *Brighton Rock,* who knows "the difference between Right and Wrong," is too obviously a caricature of secularized society; and this is true of the setting of nearly all his books. He is in his element in the underworld—the underworld of crime or finance or colonial administration. The link between the novelist and his principal characters is much closer than in Mauriac and the personal element in his experience much more pronounced. Mauriac sets his 'monsters' against the background of a comparatively homogeneous society; Greene's, we feel, provide an outlet for the abnormal elements in experience. They have for the most part had an unhappy childhood which never ceases to haunt them; they feel themselves to be hunted, persecuted beings at odds with society; and they all have the same Manichaean attitude towards the sexual connection which is regarded simultaneously with horror and fascination. In *Brighton Rock* Pinky broods over "the frightening weekly exercise of his parents which he watched from his single bed." "Phil opened an eye—yellow with sexual effort." "You could know every thing in the world and yet if you

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were ignorant of that one dirty scramble you knew nothing." The 'single bed' is a symbol of morbid isolation from natural processes; the 'yellow' and the 'dirty scramble' are the sign of a guilty shrinking from them.

Mr. Evelyn Waugh has praised Mr. Greene for his use of what he calls 'spiritual melodrama.' The invention is not, perhaps, so original as he imagines. In one of his stories Barbey d'Aurevilly describes a husband who punishes an erring wife—she is taken in *flagrante delicto* for good measure—by the application of boiling sealing wax to the appropriate part of her anatomy. For 'melodrama' in the sense of a device for the release of violence has long been an ingredient in works of fiction written by Catholics. I have never had any patience with pious busybodies who complain that Catholic novelists deal with scabrous subjects. Where they are open to criticism is in their inartistic and unworthy use of religion to give a specious glamor to sin or, as in *The Heart of the Matter,* in the use of muddled theology to create an entirely spurious *frisson.* The weakness of much of Graham Greene's work lies in the discrepancy between the private feelings that he releases and the crudity of his symbols, so that we often have the impression that we are looking at a film on which two different pictures have been superimposed. If *The Power and the Glory* is the most successful of his serious books, it is precisely because in the whisky priest he has found what Mr. Eliot calls an objective-correlative. For here the nameless fears and the sense of being a hunted man are in place and arise directly from the situation.

★

I HAVE said that the contemporary religious novel is the fruit of a long period of evolution which reaches back to the Middle Ages. The point I want to emphasize is that in the Middle Ages religion was not a special department of life or Christian writing necessarily a special department of writing. There was continuity between what might in the widest sense be called religious experience and everyday experience. Religion extended instead of narrowing the writer's field. From the seventeenth century onwards the process is gradually reversed. Religion no longer shapes the man; it is shaped by the man's emotions. Instead of the pattern being formed by the impersonal, the enduring, the normal, it is formed by the personal, the fortuitous, the abnormal, until finally it becomes merely one factor in a private world of hatred, lust and guilt. It is no longer the source of unity, but of discord. It is the source of discord not because it cuts across the values of a secularized world, but because it produces a deep division in the writer's mind. Nineteenth-century writers like Verlaine, Francis Thompson and Huysmans found no difficulty in coming to terms with a decadent literary tradition. It cannot be said that Huysmans' conversion transformed the writer. Des Esseintes into Durtal reveals not a change of heart, but a change of décor. In the twentieth century Gide used an emotional attachment to Protestantism to maintain an artificial tension—the famous Gidean 'oscillation'—between religion and a new paganism; and it is equally the source of the 'troubled conscience' of a Mauriac or a Greene.

I am well aware that it is easy to write destructively of the religious novel and I have no intention of shirking the difficulties. When a man appears before the world as a Christian writer, we are entitled to expect certain things of his work, certain qualities which are at once novel and artistic qualities. We expect religion to provide a background of order, enabling him to see good and evil in their true perspective. We expect it to act as a discipline, as a corrective to the vagaries of personal experience. We also expect charity, detachment and a balance in the portrayal of sin instead of what can only be called an incorrigibly romantic attitude towards it. It should not be a mere excuse for self-indulgence and for the release of the most destructive passions known to erring human nature nor should it degenerate into a mere religious aestheticism. For the rest, contemporary novelists who are also Christians are unquestionably most successful when they write in a lighter vein. They have given us some highly amusing 'scenes from clerical life' like Mr. Powers' *Prince of Darkness;* they have given us Mr. Greene's 'entertainments' and Mr. Waugh's earlier novels. When the writers grow serious they come to grief. *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Heart of the Matter* seem to me to be their authors' least happy productions.

Two Appeals

TWO historic Carmelite convents in Europe are currently in great need. The Monastero San Giuseppe, Via Ancilotto 6, Rome 535, Italy, the oldest Carmel in Italy, reports that "for months together we are not even able to pay our baker's bill." They are in need of food, medicines and material for habits. International money orders may be sent to the Reverend Mother Prioress at their Rome address.

The Carmel of Pamiers, a convent over three hundred years old and one of the first founded in France, is in urgent need of repairs, as some of the walls are crumbling. Remittances may be made directly to:

Révérende Mère Prieure
Carmel de Pamiers
Ariège, France

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FROM BERLIN

The Kemritz Case

IN THE last few weeks, I have given lectures on Communism before students' groups; on America, before Berlin audiences; on public opinion, before writers' clubs. But whatever the subject, the discussion has invariably turned to the Kemritz case, and this has then taken up the rest of the evening.

The unfortunate case appears to be having an effect on German-American relations so harmful that not even several Marshall Plan millions and Voice of America broadcasts could repair the damage. As a matter of fact, this *cause célèbre* of present-day Germany may already have destroyed much of the work that Americans—and democratic Germans—have performed in the last few years to remake Germany into a democracy.

★

THE case began in the dark, dirty, subterranean corridors among the post-war German ruins, where spies, informers and murderers have circulated freely and successfully, pursuing their cloak-and-dagger activities. Hans Kemritz, the protagonist of the case, which has become a test-case of international policy and morality, is only a shadowy little man. A lawyer by profession, a Nazi party member of some standing and a captain in the *Abwehr* (the German military intelligence organization) during the war, the thin-lipped, ascetic-looking Dr. Kemritz had to face hard times when the war was over. He settled in the Soviet-occupied sector of Berlin, apparently as a busy lawyer, but actually as a secret agent of the Soviets. His law offices at Schadowstrasse 1-b in Eastern Berlin, a middle-class apartment building that looks harmless to a passer-by, was a death-trap in which human beings were caught like mice.

Dr. Kemritz had been assigned by Soviet secret service officers to lure West Berliners and West Germans whom he thought dangerous to the Soviets, into East Berlin where they were immediately arrested by the MVD. It must be explained that this work was done with the approval of American occupation authorities, who were informed by the Soviets that they were thus apprehending "war criminals;" as a matter of fact, some people were kidnapped and arrested only because Dr. Kemritz designated them to his Soviet bosses as being "decided enemies of Communism." Dr. Kemritz succeeded in kidnapping at least twenty people, among whom were three women.

After working successfully at this job as well as at other assignments given him by Soviet secret service men, Dr. Kemritz moved from East Berlin to West Germany as a "political refugee from Soviet persecution." Actually, he had been given a new intelligence assignment by the Soviets. But he had hardly arrived in Western Germany when he offered his services to an American intelligence agency. From now on, the double agent seems to have been a valuable man to both sides, as long as both sides were paying him well.

While Dr. Kemritz lived a secluded, busy life in a comfortable West German villa at Bad Homburg, Hesse, a lawsuit for conspiracy to kidnap was started against him. Sufficient proof of the accusation was presented by the widow of Hans-Juergen von Hake, a former German movie executive and *Abwehr* captain who was abducted by Kremritz and who died in a Soviet prison in 1950. Kemritz was arrested by the German authorities, freed under bail, and was soon to be convicted. But the United States Land Commissioner of Hesse issued an order to the German authorities instructing them to quash the suit immediately.

Shortly thereafter, the widow of the victim who was obsessed by a desire to avenge the murder of her husband, started a second, civilian suit against Kemritz in West Berlin where the crime had been performed and where the laws against kidnapping are more stringent than they are elsewhere in Western Germany, since the local situation in West Berlin is so favorable for these abductions. You can read almost any day in the Berlin papers about a kidnapping the way you read in the New York papers about minor traffic accidents. The Berlin court convicted Dr. Kemritz *in absentia* and granted the widow of von Hake damages and a life-long widow's pension of about seventy dollars a month to be paid by Kemritz.

★

THE judgment had hardly been pronounced when Ernst Reuter, the Mayor of West Berlin and one of Europe's best democratic leaders, received a letter from the commandant of the American Occupation Force in Berlin, who also serves as the Berlin representative of the United States High Commissioner for Germany. The letter ordered the mayor to have the court immediately quash the new decision too and throw out this as well as any other lawsuit against Kemritz. The order was based on a paragraph in the Occupation Law which says that occupation authorities have a right to change German court decisions if the interest, security or prestige of the Allied powers are involved. Kemritz, it was said in defense of this American act, had done valuable services for the American cause and therefore had to be protected by the Americans. Only if and when the court decision was nullified would the American representatives be willing to discuss the case further with German representatives.

The order given by the United States general to the Berlin Mayor hit like a bombshell. Mayor Reuter, in a dignified yet firm statement, refused to obey it, and he was supported solemnly by the speakers and members of every political party in West Berlin. Reuter explained that the execution of the order would mean that he would have to commit an unconstitutional and illegal act. He had sworn allegiance to the new German constitution

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which especially guaranteed the independence of the judges and forbade any political interference with their decisions by political authorities; to obey the general's orders and to force the Berlin judge to nullify a judgment legally arrived at and based on the law would mean a totalitarian act against the basis of German democracy.

John J. McCloy, the U. S. High Commissioner for Germany, in a somewhat debatable analogy with American conditions, countered that American Federal law was superior to State law, and that the same applied to Occupation law in Germany superseding German law. "If Mayor Reuter will cease lecturing me on democracy," I heard Mr. McCloy jokingly remark to a group of correspondents, "I will cease lecturing him about the law." When I heard the crack, I was not amused. For it seemed to me a rather sad admission of the tragic element in the case—Berlin had to defend the principles of democracy against the fine (though doubtful) points of law as the eminent lawyers of the Legal Division of the High Commission for Germany saw them—*Fiat jus, pereat justitia.*

★

THE conflict that ensued became a mass of misunderstandings, and it stimulated rather ugly emotions. Neither the man who was the cause of all this, Herr Kemritz, nor "the services he had given to the Allied cause," nor the legal point finally uncovered in his behalf, was worth the effect of it all.

While Reuter convincingly explained the democratic meaning of his stand against undemocratic orders, a large section of Germans, as was to be expected, saw in the conflict less of a democratic than a nationalist meaning. "It goes to show," I heard again and again from people of all walks of life, "that might comes before right, all the American teachings to the contrary notwithstanding." As a matter of fact, to many Germans who for a long time had suspected "hypocrisy" behind the American preachings, here seemed to be the proof that American practice was indeed little different from authoritarianism. Still very insecure in their relation to democracy, they found in this case a good reason to rationalize their distrust of democracy. Wasn't it true that Americans acted like authoritarians when it seemed to fit their interests? The case also seemed to show that the democratic spirit is still weak in Germany since many Germans did not accept Mayor Reuter's democratic reaction to the case, did not set out to fight for their rights, to appeal to public opinion at home and abroad, to trust in the final victory of good principles; on the contrary, they accepted the American stand as another injustice on the part of the powerful conqueror.

★

WHAT made the American case so weak was the fact that it protected Kemritz from punishment for his Soviet-ordered crimes against inhumanity, crimes that Americans and West Berliners are supposed to resist together. Although the double agent probably did some useful work for the Americans, he did at least as much useful work for the Soviets. The Germans prosecuted him for the latter work. But it looked as if the Americans were still condoning this work.

Moreover, the very idea of American post-war justice was turned around. In the Nuremberg trials, people were convicted for specific "crimes against humanity" despite the fact that in certain instances they had deserved well of humanity—take the cases of the ambassadors who helped Nazi victims, but who did not outwardly divorce themselves from Nazi politics and who were sent to prison; here a man was absolved of his crimes against humanity because he had—apparently not for humanitarian reasons—also done some work helpful to the American interests.

Although there was certainly a point of military security involved in the American attitude—it was argued that not to protect Kemritz would mean that the Americans would lose a number of other double agents who would not dare to continue to work also for the West—it appears that the interest and the prestige of America can be served not so much by an association with Kemritz and his crimes as by a closer association with the principles of democracy. To many Germans, and to some Americans, it seemed as if the civilian representative of America, who is responsible only to the President and his Secretary of State, should not have made the technical interests of an intelligence outfit his own, when the moral and political cause of America was and is at stake. Important as intelligence is in the present state of the cold war (it would be childish to deny this) the political cause, if there is a conflict such as there is in the Kemritz case, presents greater interest. If the work of a couple of intelligence agents is to be balanced against the democratic goodwill of the German people, the latter has much more weight.

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A DAY before the ultimatum to Mayor Reuter by the Berlin commandant was to have run out, the court which had convicted Kemritz suspended its judgment. Thus a bitter conflict was avoided and the arbitration court, where American and German representatives can now discuss the case behind closed doors will take up its work. Whatever the outcome, though, considerable damage will have been done. If the Americans do not stand their ground, it will be interpreted by the Germans as the reversal of a *diktat* which had to be lifted due to American weakness. If they do stand, it will make another argument for the anti-democrats—Nazis and Communists have already used the case in their propaganda—who will try to show that Americans are also dictators. Herr Kemritz, the double agent with the dirty hands, will remain a name long remembered in Germany. Only in the event that the American people become familiar with the case and—in a truly democratic spirit—protest the position of their authorities and thus demonstrate to the Germans how democracy works, can the test-case which has done and is doing so much harm, still become a force for good. NORBERT MUHLEN.

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In Defense of Philip Murray

I REMEMBER hearing Philip Murray speak at a convention of the Transport Workers in Madison Square Garden back about 1940. Sitting at the press table only a few feet away, I was able to get a good look at the man who a short time later succeeded John L. Lewis as president of the CIO.

I remember thinking to myself with some surprise, "Here is a humble man, a good man." I don't remember what he said, but I remember the impact of a Christian personality. The years went by and I wrote a number of things in different publications that were rather critical of Mr. Murray. I don't suppose they bothered him. I doubt if he even read them. The main burden of them was that he was not going ahead fast enough in the job of eliminating Communist influence from the CIO.

Murray had his own time-table. Looking back, I am not sure that it wasn't the right one. At any rate he managed to throw them out without at the same time letting them take more than a minimum of American workers with them. It was a good clean job.

I did not see Mr. Murray again until last summer, when I heard him speak at the convention banquet of the Newspaper Guild in Pittsburgh. Once again I cannot tell you very much of what he said. It was a good speech, in spots a rather angry speech, angry about the job that Congress was doing on price control and the American pocketbook.

★

ONCE again it was the impact of the personality that stayed with me. It was interesting to see how the man had developed in ten years. He had come out from under the shadow of John L. Lewis and become a top labor leader in his own right. He was thinner, weaker physically, but stronger in mind and spirit. I have been sceptical of union men who raved about Phil Murray in the past, but now I am definitely and unashamedly one of their number. I have seldom seen a more impressive man—humorous, honest, intelligent, forceful, spiritual—a most impressive man. I believe he is a great man.

Murray is a loyal and conscientious Catholic. We can be proud of that fact. It was largely through his influence that the industry council plan proposed by Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* was adopted by the CIO as its own plan. Incidentally, there have been reports that he was going to quit as president of the CIO because of illness, but the latest word is that he will stay in for at least another term.

Dr. David Goldstein, a famous convert, writer and lecturer, writes a regular column for the Boston *Pilot*, a Catholic diocesan newspaper. In the last two issues, Sept. 29 and Oct. 6, Dr. Goldstein has devoted his column to a violent attack upon the leaders of the AFL and CIO, particularly upon Murray and James B. Carey, Catholic secretary-treasurer of the CIO.

I don't think these attacks represent the editorial opinion of the *Pilot* itself. I hope not. The *Pilot* has given a fair hearing to labor's side of the question and recently published a fine editorial on the textile strike in Dighton, Mass.

These are some of the things that Dr. Goldstein has to say about Murray and Carey: ". . . If the mandates of the Pope, related to issues that affect the welfare of the Church, are binding upon Catholics, as they are, all Catholics are obligated to obey them, even in their trade unions, or at least not to oppose them.

"We assume that these principles are well known to . . . Murray . . . and Carey. . . . This being so, then must we conclude that their attitude toward the Spain and Jerusalem issues is a total repudiation of the attitude of the Church to which they owe allegiance."

He also says this: "They (Murray and Carey) have both been publicly anti-Catholic Church by giving comfort to the Communists in the CIO; and the World Federation of Trade Unions until a little over a year ago; and continuing their anti-Catholic Church attitude toward the Spain and Jerusalem issues."

★

LET us take up these charges one by one. All, that is, but the Jerusalem question, which Dr. Goldstein won't get around to till next week. I hope he will excuse me if I don't wait.

Communists in the CIO, first. Murray didn't put the Communists in the CIO. He found them there and threw them out. But apparently this is not sufficient for Dr. Goldstein. He should have thrown them out much sooner. So Murray is therefore anti-Catholic Church. I respectfully suggest that Dr. Goldstein get down on his knees and thank God that Murray threw them out at all.

Second, the World Federation of Trade Unions. This organization was created right after World War II in London, mainly on the initiative of the British Trades Union Congress, which is now and was then highly anti-Communist. In the good feeling that existed then towards Russia, the Russian unions were invited to participate, much as the Russian government was invited to participate in the United Nations. The AFL was the only important labor organization in the world that did not belong to the WFTU, largely because the CIO had been admitted. The AFL had succeeded in keeping the CIO out of the old International Federation of Trade Unions.

The Catholic unions of Europe belonged to the WFTU at first and would have continued to do so if they could have belonged on their own terms. Eventually, the Communists gained control of the organization. The CIO, the British and other anti-Communist labor organizations then pulled out and, together with the AFL, organized the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

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But apparently this is not sufficient for Dr. Goldstein. Murray should not have allowed the CIO to enter any organization that had Communists in it. He charges that "both Murray and Carey have deliberately disregarded the mandate of Pope Pius XI, which Catholics in the trade unions are morally obligated to obey." And as proof he quotes the encyclical *On Atheistic Communism,* which condemns Communism as "intrinsically wrong" and adds that "no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever."

This is an old charge. It springs from the failure to distinguish between Communism and Communists, a rather elementary distinction. If one could not make such a distinction one would even now have to condemn all the countries that still participate in the work of the United Nations, all the Catholic political leaders who participated in the governments of Italy, France, Belgium and Holland in the years after World War II when the Communist Party was represented in government coalitions, and, indeed, all the Catholics everywhere who ever cooperated with a single Communist individual in "any undertaking whatsoever."

★

WE COME then to the question of Franco and Spain. The CIO, and the AFL as well, have made no secret of the fact that they are anti-Franco. This is not surprising since they are both American organizations devoted to the principle of free trade unionism, the Bill of Rights, and democratic government. Franco, on the other hand, does not believe in free trade unions, or the Bill of Rights, or any Spanish equivalent thereof, or in democratic government. He is, in fact, a dictator. It is a sad day indeed for the Church if the time has come when self-appointed guardians of the Faith are going to read out of the Church every American Catholic who cannot stand up, raise his right arm in a Falangist salute and cry, "Heil, Franco!"

It is to me a significant thing that the Catholic governments of a number of Western European democracies —notably France, Holland, Belgium and, I believe, Italy as well—have been just as anti-Franco as the CIO, if not more so. It is a significant thing that the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, a predominantly Catholic organization, has just issued another statement calling upon Franco "to abolish the present trade union system and to restore the freedom of association which is a natural right of man and the essential condition for a free and harmonious social life." These men know Franco and Spain far better than we do. They live right next door.

This statement of the IFCTU appears in the September 30 issue of the *Labor Leader,* American organ of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. The editors add their own protest and quote another papal "mandate" that Dr. Goldstein seems to have missed, that of Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum,* which dates back to 1891.

In a discussion of the right of workers to form their own unions, the Pope says: "Particular societies, then, although they exist within the State and are each a part of the State, nevertheless cannot be prohibited by the State absolutely and as such. For to enter into a 'society' of this kind is the natural right of man; and the State must protect natural rights, not destroy them; and if it forbids its citizens to form associations, it contradicts the very principle of its own existence; for both they and it exist in virtue of the same principle, viz., the natural propensity of man to live in society."

Spanish papers please copy—if they dare.

I would also like to suggest for Dr. Goldstein's consideration another papal pronouncement, which though not of the weight of a "mandate," indicates how our present Holy Father, Pius XII, feels on the subject of democracy, civil rights and dictatorship. I refer to the Pope's Christmas Message of 1944 and, in particular, the following passages:

". . . The peoples have, as it were, awakened from a long torpor. They have assumed in relation to the state, and those who govern, a new attitude—one that questions, criticizes, distrusts. Taught by bitter experience, they are more aggressive in opposing the concentration of dictatorial power that cannot be censured or touched, and call for a system of government more in keeping with the dignity and liberty of the citizens."

A little later the Pope unmistakably indicates his own preference in modern systems of government: "If we consider the extent and nature of the sacrifices demanded of all citizens, especially in our day, when the activity of the state is so vast and decisive, the democratic form of government appears to many as a postulate of nature imposed by reason itself."

I still think Phil Murray is a good Catholic and a great man.

JOHN C. CORT.

The Stage

GLAD TIDINGS

EDWARD MABLEY has described his new play as a 'romantic comedy' and therein lies a good bit of his difficulty in bringing it off. He has not been willing to try for an outright farce, though his materials naturally lead him in that direction; and he has not been able to give his characters the necessary dimension, or emotional sensitivity, for honest romance. He is, as a result, stuck with a play which has a certain number of laughs, some of them pretty good ones, and a certain number of mildly affecting moments, especially those involving a young actor named Henry Garrard, but a play which is in the long run neither funny enough to succeed on one level nor moving enough to succeed on the other. The absence of a single emphatic style discomfits the audience, asking it to alter the quality of its response too often and

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too abruptly; and finally even the virtues of the evening tend to cancel each other out.

Mr. Mabley's inconsistent tone has further complications. The play's basic situation is both comic and amoral: a middle-aged writer about to marry one woman discovers that he has fathered, illegitimately and nineteen years earlier, a daughter by another. The writer's adjustment to his delayed parenthood, and his more or less tempestuous renewal of relations with the mother, constitute the balance of what is meant to be an engagingly irreverent joke. But sustaining this kind of high-handed fun requires a hard-headed talent. Amoral comedy is always heartless comedy, and the introduction of even occasional moments of warmth invariably destroys the jauntiness, the intellectual surface, of the form. To engage us emotionally is to engage us morally, to cause us to ask all kinds of inappropriate questions; and the author's insistence on doing so only adds to the ambiguity of his play and the distress of his audience.

Actually, Mr. Mabley's best talents would seem to lie on the side of seriousness—his comedy is frequently flat and almost always insufficiently pointed—so that in the present instance he would seem to have got hold of an idea which was in itself workable but which was not right for him. His acting company does its best by him: Melvyn Douglas, as the writer, is alternately brisk and understanding; Signe Hasso, as the mother, is skillful and showy in a somewhat strident part; Patricia Benoit makes the daughter more charming than a farce character has any right to be; and Henry Garrard, in the extraneous part of still another, though this time legitimate, child, gives what is probably the best performance in the show. Mr. Douglas has directed, and done so very smoothly, but he cannot conceal the essential cross-purposes of the piece. (*At the Lyceum*)

MUSIC IN THE AIR

THE obvious reason for reviving this Jerome Kern-Oscar Hammerstein musical of the thirties was the Kern score, which included such delights as "I've Told Every Little Star," "The Song is You," and "Egern on the Tegern See." Unfortunately, it turns out to have been the only reason, and not a good enough one. The Hammerstein book has dated badly; and since it was one of the earliest of what are now called 'integrated' books, there is a lot of it. Songs and libretto are carefully interlocked, the songs usually springing from realistic motivations in the text, and this procedure not only requires that we pay attention to some remarkably dull dialogue but also that we catch the songs in interrupted snatches. The orchestration, winding in and out under spoken passages, is no doubt musically interesting; but since we have come to the revival primarily to hear the songs, it is frustrating to be fed them in bits and pieces. Only once in the course of the evening is a song sung without some degree of interruption — when Muriel O'Malley sits down and delivers herself of "Egern on the Tegern See"—and, appropriately, it stops the show. (*At the Ziegfeld*) WALTER KERR.

The Screen

MELLOW—LIKE AN OLD CHEESE

HAVING just returned from a pleasant vacation in Hollywood *and* sunny California, I am feeling much too mellow to be cross about anything this week—even too mellow to be angry with *Time* Magazine for wrongly identifying me in their article on THE COMMONWEAL and for calling me "Commonweal's scolding movie reviewer." ("Balding," they might have said, but "scolding" seldom.) Anyway I enjoyed my Hollywood sojourn; I met many interesting people among the movie-makers and stars; the studios were excellent hosts; and I was grateful for the opportunity to see films in the making. Two things that impressed me most during my visit were Hollywood's concerted drive to end all this talk about the industry's dying on its feet and the fact that the making of a movie is such hard work. Of course I knew that a movie consists of a series of little pictures on celluloid, but I never realized before how much work went into those little pictures. Even before all the seemingly endless rehearsals and shooting of scenes that I saw on the sets, were the more time-consuming planning and conferences about story, script, cast, costuming, directing, photography and what not. As I watched even small sequences being rehearsed, photographed and then rephotographed, I began to wonder how on earth a movie ever got done. And even after the actual shooting which I saw, comes the cutting and editing and adjustment of sound track and music.

So I was greatly impressed with the production of movies and more greatly impressed with the serious, hard-working people who make them. Considering all the mechanical problems in connection with films, the wonder is that they ever get done at all. And the amazing thing is that a movie can go through all this planning and the exigencies of mechanization and still come out a fresh and spontaneous work of art. Most of them aren't works of art, of course; but some of them are; and many of them are lively and stimulating pieces of entertainment that deserve more credit than they get. And some movies are a pile of junk that don't deserve any attention at all. My job as I see it is to keep you informed about the movies, particularly about the worthy ones—but also about some of those that didn't come out as well as their producers intended. Your interest I'm sure is in the finished product, not in how hard it is to make a movie. And if at times I really am a "scolding movie reviewer," it is because I want to keep you informed and because I really like movies and want them to be "your best entertainment."

★

HEREWITH are a few notes on movies that were released while I was on my vacation. All are comedies and worth your attention for one reason or

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the other. They all have a quality of freshness in spite of the fact that intrinsically they are only little pictures on strips of celluloid.

"Here Comes the Groom" gives Bing Crosby another chance to sparkle and Bing makes the most of it. The story, produced and directed by Frank Capra, is a typical Capra legend about an irresponsible reporter who has to get married in a hurry if he wants to keep a couple of cute orphans he picked up in France. The girl Bing wants to marry is Jane Wyman, but Jane, tired of Bing's carefree ways, is already engaged to Franchot Tone and his millions. So Bing goes to work on Alexis Smith who loves Franchot; and in teaching her how to get her man, he gets his Jane. A very cozy American dream, but better than the plot is the film's lighthearted sense of fun. Jane and Bing, and in fact everyone else in this comedy, seem to be having such a perfectly swell time that some of the glow rubs off on you too.

★

"THE Lavender Hill Mob" is one of those irrepressible English satires with Alec Guinness giving another of his superb performances. Playing a highly respectable, seemingly stuffy bank clerk who thinks up a foolproof idea for stealing a million pounds (sterling) in gold, Guinness is utterly delightful as he calmly and coldly goes about his wicked machinations, and the cast surrounding him, particularly Stanley Holloway, are almost equally as funny. Much of the success of this hilarious *tour de force* depends on the witty script of T. E. B. Clarke and the good cinematic direction given it by Charles Crichton. I'm not sure which proves funnier: the idea of turning pure gold into paperweights shaped like the Eiffel Tower or the supercilious smirk on Guinness' smug puss.

★

IN spite of the fact that it gets almost sentimentally sticky at times, *"Angels in the Outfield"* is so amusing that it should appeal to all moviegoers even if they don't care for movies about baseball players, nuns and angels. In this little fantasy Paul Douglas gives a very realistic performance as the tough, blasphemous manager of the Pirates. When his team keeps losing game after game, his guardian angel promises him some victories if he'll cut out the blasphemy, and love instead of slugging his neighbor. Douglas gets himself under control, and sure enough, his team starts winning like everything. The plot becomes a little complicated when an orphan (Donna Corcoran) under the tutelage of two sprightly nuns (Spring Byington, Ellen Corby) gets wise to the angel's cooperation, but producer-director Clarence Brown works the whole piece out so well that it never lags. The sweet touches are cleverly alternated with equally sour bits (Keenan Wynn gives a practically perfect portrayal of a cynical radio announcer) so the film never has a chance to get lop-sided; and the baseball stuff is done expertly—whether you're a fan or not.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Off to a good start!

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Simone Weil, Saint of the Churchless

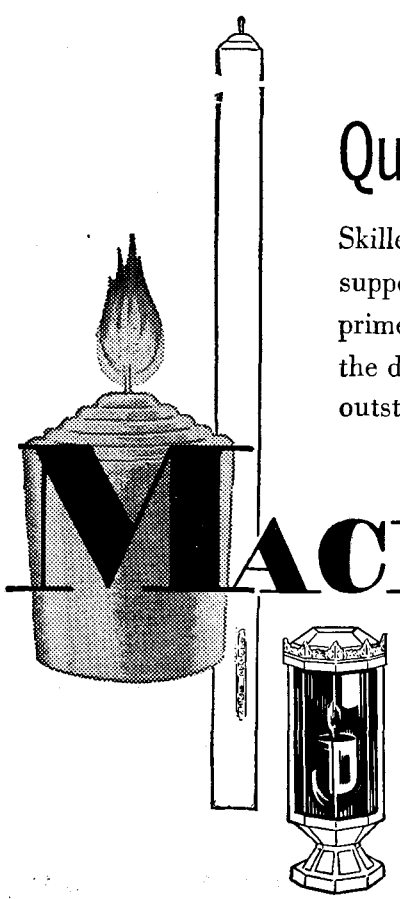
By H. A. REINHOLD

LOOKING back on the tremendous experience of reading *Waiting for God,* by Simone Weil (Putnam. $3.50), I am left with a feeling of complete inadequacy. Even with the help of a really magnificent introduction by Leslie A. Fiedler, I am still at a loss to place this book, whose author André Gide says is "the most truly spiritual writer of this century." Gide is backed up by T. S. Eliot, and what these two have to say is said much better by Fiedler: "she does not seem strange to us as other mystics and witnesses of God have seemed strange . . . quite suddenly God had taken her, radical, agnostic, contemptuous of religious life and practice. . . ." His comparison of her attitude toward the Catholic Church with Kierkegaard's towards the Lutheran State Church of Denmark is not too far-fetched. I think Mr. Fiedler sums it all up very well by calling Simone Weil the saint, the mystic and the witness of God, of the un-churched, the agnostic and the intellectual.

Simone Weil—who was she? She was the child of well-to-do French Jews, born in Paris in 1909. Her parents belonged to the growing group of assimilated and agnostic Jews whose position is made clear in Karl Stern's *Pillar of Fire.* She was an extraordinarily gifted girl who shared in that strange paradox of her generation: the rejection of bourgeois comfort and acceptance of heroic asceticism and detachment from worldly goods found among Marxist "materialists." She avidly shared the poverty, insecurity and hopelessness of the proletariat throughout her life—in underpaid teaching positions, in factory work, on the Loyalist side in Spain (which experience cured her forever of Marxism)—finally in the uprootedness of a Jew in Vichy, in the refuge of the United States, which she rejected, and in her last days in beleaguered England, where she starved her frail body to death by insisting on living on the rations allowed in occupied France. She died in 1943 in a sanatorium.

Her closest friend on this earth was a French Dominican, Father Perrin. It was the kind of friendship which could stand the closest scrutiny of either a sniffing Freudian or severe spiritual director looking out for the dangers of "particular friendship" in the strictest religious community. Her own theories of friendship, which are lucidly explained in this book—"There is not friend-

REV. H. A. REINHOLD is a priest of the Yakima, Washington, diocese and a leader in the liturgical movement.



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ship where distance is not kept and respected"—are important because she never held a theory which she didn't also live.

Is this not the stuff a saint is made of? Simone Weil's personality was of such glowing sincerity and honesty that one could call her the almost perfect antithesis of a hypocrite. She was so uncompromising, yet so touchingly lovable, that I can well see why she should be the patron saint of all who stand at the threshold of faith with some hesitation after a look at us, the people inside.

★

AS Fiedler says: "Few of us, to be sure, would find nothing to dissent from her religious thought." (Though this is a digression, I can't help going on with his beautiful quotation: "Fewer still would be capable of emulating the terrible purity of her life; none could measure himself, without shame, against the absolute ethos towards which she aspired.") Simone Weil, her gaze fixed on the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, remained outside and died outside in spite of her love for the Church. Her book is unorthodox, and I would venture to say in a way dangerous for anyone with a weak faith. For such a one it would be much better to read the beautiful conversion of Karl Stern with its noble feeling for all that is sublime, lovable and touching in Judaism, with Stern's warm love for his people and high praise for Jewish spirituality.

In Stern we have the splendid combination of a man of fine mind, rich cultural background and warm, lovable personality coming into the Church of Christ with eyes open. Dr. Stern entered the Church through the antechamber of religious Judaism and saw Christianity as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Simone Weil, according to man's judgment, never entered the Church. She was afraid of the "patriotism" she saw in the members of the Church, as she called it; she recoiled from that "group loyalty" she saw in Catholics which seemed to her to have blinded them. To her Catholics were unable to see where they as a group were impoverished or to recognize what is positive in other religions.

Catholics in our day are by no means as uniform a lot as they may seem to be. There really is no such thing as that monolithic monster which robs Paul Blanshard of his sleep. It is but a wishful dream projected up from the malicious goings-on in his subconscious. Looking a little closer, with the help of Papal encyclicals and observations made by sociological analysts, it rather seems as if beneath the cloak of uniformity there is a body stretching and turning in an effort to find a position commensurate with the space created by the twentieth century.

The almost startling reforms of the present Pope are not a mean witness that something is going on. Not for a minute do I agree with Graham Greene's idea, expressed in his beautiful article in *Life* on Pius XII, that the unyielding, stern directives coming from the Holy See are somehow not the expression of the Pope himself,

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because they do not seem to be the voice of the beloved shepherd the pilgrims see. Nor do I want to give too much emphasis to Karl Adam's thesis on the loss the Church suffered in fulness, richness and "catholicity" when Luther in his teutonic despair started an outraged rebellion among the non-Latin and non-Celtic nations of the European peninsula, robbing her of a balancing element in spirituality and burdening her with an anti-Protestant emphasis on dogmatic detail. Those things are too subtle. Not merely angels, but seraphim fear to tread, because even after four hundred and more years the patient is hardly out of traumatic shock.

Not only those outside the Church are seething with doubt and puzzle. How strange it looks to an outsider to see the cautious and detached attitude of the Church toward Theresa Neumann and then contrast the pained and sparing analysis of this phenomenon by the Catholic scholar Hilda Graef with the contemptuous and emotional echoes of Theresa's followers. And yet the Catholic enthusiasts are the very same people who will unhesitatingly call the vision—if there was any—of Joseph Smith and his "revelation" a swindle. Father Martindale's labored and circumspect effort to get at the meaning of the complex called Fatima, to cite another example, offers a startling contrast to the loudness, the harshness of tone, the unique claims made in its cause by the popular expression, especially in pious monthlies and weeklies.

The other day I accidentally tuned in on a morning broadcast of some "old-fashioned revival" preacher, a man of such breathless speech it seemed as if someone else were pumping air into his lungs with bellows. He was asking his listeners to write in for a "healing cloth." He also told them to touch the radio from which his voice was coming, in order to get relief from their pain and anguish. Then he proceeded to read testimonies of people who claimed that "it worked." All of which sounded very much like the testimonies I have read in leaflets and folders put out by certain religious orders to "sell" their unfailing novena.

These things are confusing not only to sensitive and cultured (and maligned) intellectuals, but to the simple people who don't know where to look for "religion."

Father Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., in *Southern Parish,* the first volume of his scholarly analysis of the "Dynamics of a City Church," finds a frighteningly large percentage of "good Catholics," not the highbrows but average middle class people and hard parish workers, off center in their belief: 9 percent of this group advocated euthanasia; 14 percent looked for relaxation of the "divorce laws" of the Church; 24 percent did not believe in damnation; 36 percent denied a personal devil; 46 percent preferred public over religious schools; 33 percent believed in restricting the number of children; 74 percent would not send their children to a racially mixed kindergarten, etc. These examples should be read not for scandal's sake but to show how, among other symptoms, they indicate the restlessness of our age, reflected even among people who sit in pews Sunday after Sunday, make annual missions, receive the Sacraments and recognize—to what degree?—the leadership of priests.

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And into this company we invite a person like Simone Weil!

While I may seem to have wandered away from the book in question, I am only trying to outline why Simone Weil has had the posthumous appeal we find in her and why she is "dangerous" to Catholic intellectuals who suffer from the ills roughly sketched above.

★

WE can say that the reasons which Simone Weil gave Father Perrin for her refusal to be baptized were objectively erroneous, though honestly convincing to her. She seems to have been a true mystic of the school of the great Teresa and John of the Cross, and none of the reasons she gives are coercive but one; that is, she believed that she was under strict obedience to God and God had not given her the sign. She could not disobey her conscience. Even a moral theologian can not quarrel with that, and anybody familiar with her icy logic and glowing love of God will disregard the suggestion that she could have been dishonest. An example: "There were some saints who approved of the Crusades or the Inquisition. I cannot help thinking that they were in the wrong. I cannot go against the light of conscience." She fears that "loyalty to the cause would interfere with my attitude of perfect obedience to God."

It would not be difficult to label Simone Weil as heterodox in the light of current and prevailing theology. She praises the Stoics, the Albigensians and men of a Platonic bent. She considers all religions as "translations" into different idioms of the one, transcendent revelation. One might level the charges of quietism against her central position, which is that all you can do is "wait for God" without stirring. According to her there is no "search" for God, only a desire to stay ready for God. She leaves unexplained what she calls "human conventions," in which, as far as I can see, she includes practically all but direct mystical union with God, even the Sacraments.

She rebukes Pascal for his emphasis on the "search of God"—it is a metaphor "suggestive of efforts of muscular will," an apparent confusion of "faith and autosuggestion." The attitude that brings about salvation is not like any form of activity. It is "an attentive and faithful immobility . . . active search is prejudicial not only to love but also to the intelligence. . . ." She brands as the "trap of traps" the social aspect of Christianity, because this social aspect is apt to substitute itself for faith, it is almost "inevitable," and it is "impossible to distinguish" Christian social thought and action from religion itself.

A modern theologian scrutinizing Simone Weil's confessions would find many more heterodox statements, even after making allowance for a subjective terminology in her use of the terms "necessity," "affliction" and "love." Taking a broader and more comprehensive view of the tradition of theology in its totality, one detects in her a slant of emphasis in the direction of "popular" theology in some ways, as, e.g., in her understanding of the Holy Eucharist solely in terms of the Real Presence.

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This leaves out the Eucharist's primary, liturgical aspect and robs it of the rich overtone it has in patristic and classical Scholastic theology. The emphasis on this one aspect, forced on us by the late medieval controversialists and heretics, formed Simone Weil's impoverished conception of the Church, the Sacraments, and liturgy. This, of course, was not her fault so much as that of the literature, preaching and devotional life she was faced with.

★

AT the bottom of all her story is a subjective and real experience of God, of Jesus Christ, Who seized her soul. Leslie Fiedler, a Jew himself, is deeply convinced, and says so in his introduction, that we have to do here with true mysticism. Throughout, her whole book reveals a purity, a simplicity and an earnestness that make it impossible for me to discard Simone Weil as a swindler, an hysteric or one deluded by demonic influences. To all who take scandal in the day to day religious life of the "churched," to all who call themselves agnostic yet are longing for God, who reject the apparent compromises of established faiths, Simone Weil's writings, ascetic, single-minded, demanding as they are, will appear as a gate to the Divine.

Her deep love and respect for the Church, even recognition of Catholicism as the truest of churches, will impress those who already share this respect but fear to get involved with what the Germans call *Vulgaer-Katholizismus*. It will lead them to the very intersection of Christianity and all that is not Christianity where we find Simone Weil. With her they will accept the Lord's Prayer as their creed. "We cannot take a single step toward Him. We do not walk vertically. We can only turn our eyes toward Him. . . . We only have to change the direction in which we are looking. . . ." "Men struck down by affliction are at the foot of the Cross, almost at the greatest possible distance from God. It must not be thought that sin is a greater distance. Sin is not a distance." It is—and here we again come up against her spiritual quietism—"a turning of our gaze in the wrong direction."

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One of the virtues of the much maligned intellectual is his sense for the majesty and integral holiness of that "fact" which hides behind his professed agnosticism, even behind atheism. The one against whom the noble atheist rebels is not God Himself, Whom he secretly worships in his negation, but the God of preachers, of the ready and pat apologeticists, the "grim" God of certain devotions, the one the experts know all about, the narrow image made by men, be they illiterate or theologians.

Simone Weil is the door through which such rebels may enter: a frail Jewish girl of high intellect, of a love of neighbor that outdoes the good Samaritan's, of honesty, integrity and profundity of thought. She may have erred in much of what she wrote, but she was right in her full, obedient surrender to God unto her last breath.

Of Note

The Meaning of History

THE *Review of Politics* (Notre Dame, Indiana) in its October issue carries an article on Marxist History and Sacred History by Jean Danielou, S.J. Here are two significant excerpts.

> The essential idea of Marxism is that the reality of history is dialectics by which man creates himself, that is, builds up humanity little by little through the transformation of the material conditions of his existence. Consequently, the most effective men and the true heroes of the modern world will be scientists and workers; poets, artists, philosophers, and saints are of secondary importance. Thus, for Marx two categories of men are absolutely essential: the scientist who invents and the worker who produces the conditions which ought to improve the life of man. This philosophy is obviously a dynamic one for those two classes of men because it makes them the essential agents of history. The stages in the history of humanity are the great ages of stone, of iron, of steam, of electricity, of radio and of atomic energy. This is the only important reality. All the rest is suprastructure. The levers which guide human progress are techniques; the only way to develop humanity is to develop technique.
>
> What gives force to this position is that it is not only a matter of making man aware of things, but of helping him to commit himself by showing him the reason and value of this commitment. It is not simply a vulgar materialism, but a humanism, a conception of man. As such Marxism is the absolute contradiction of Christianity: man is the supreme value for man; he is his own creator. To recognize God is degrading and vilifying; to reject him is the essential condition of a realistic humanism.

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Henceforth we cannot confront Marxism with a more or less pale Christian humanism. If Christian thought sometimes seems weak alongside Marxism, it is because Christianity does not rely enough on its essential principle, on the fact that it is a religion of God, a divine conception of history. For the Christian it is not only a human society which is built up in history but a divine destiny of man. We shall only overcome Marxism when we realize that it is Christianity which makes history real. Christianity is also fundamentally one history and not a conception of an ideal world more or less outside of human realities, and sort of added to them. As an interpretation of total history, Christianity gives history its definitive meaning.

The history of the world, in the Christian sense of the word, is essentially Sacred History, the history of the great works of God in time in which, with the irresistible power of His creative spirit, He builds the true humanity, the eternal City. Hence, if we wish to find the Christian meaning of history, we must know how to go beyond apparent and external history in order to penetrate to the real one which is built in the depths of man. Only the Holy Spirit can give us an understanding of this. We find the essentials of it in Scripture, an account of the great works of God and a description for us of the ways of God and of the manner in which He does things. It is, therefore, in the measure in which we live by Scripture as the true reality that we shall discover and understand the universe according to God. . . .

To be sure, Marxism does not deny absolutely that Christianity is a great and beautiful thing, that it brought a veritable revelation into the world. But Marxism says that what Christianity accomplished in the past is over and done with; now it is in a state of crisis and a new humanity is beginning. We are beyond Christianity on the road to a religion of the new times.

For the Marxist, history has not yet set its course: he looks toward the future. For the Christian, history is substantially fixed and the essential element is at the center, not at the end. There is thus no total risk. The acceptance of salvation given by Christ—which is not our work—is an aspect, in the eschatological order, of this recognition of our basic dependence, a dependence constituting the fundamental religious attitude. Does this mean that there is nothing more to be done? Yes, *if*, after the event of the Redemption, no fundamental task remained to be accomplished. But the Redemption is a reality of incomparable dynamism; for what is acquired by right for all humanity remains indeed to be transmitted to all men. There is the mystery of missions and the grandeur of the missionary ideal. Sacred history is the history of the present in which we live, of which we are the instruments as the prophets once were who worked to extend to all peoples what Jesus Chrsit brought to us.

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Books

The Ascent to Truth. Thomas Merton. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50.

IT was Miss Evelyn Underhill who said, "The greatest mystics have not been heretics but Catholic saints." *The Ascent to Truth* shows the reasons why.

This book is a study of the works of Saint John of the Cross. One of the chief reasons why Saint John is such a great mystic, as Father Merton says, is that his mysticism is built upon the solid foundations of the dogmatic theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas. One's spiritual life is an organism, of which dogmatic theology constitutes the skeleton and mystical life forms the flesh and blood. Without reason and dogma, mysticism is apt to be a monster. Without mysticism and contemplation, dogmatic theology and discursive reasoning are apt to be like a sapless tree. We are too prone to forget that Saint Thomas himself was one of the greatest mystics of all times.

The airplane can fly precisely because it is built according to the laws of physics. A mystic can be truly united with God only if he follows strictly the laws of reason and the principles of metaphysics. This is what Father Merton calls intellectual asceticism, which, together with moral asceticism, must be passed through, before one can hope to be a temple of the Holy Spirit or a sanctuary of the Blessed Trinity. Only an unleavened bread can be fully leavened by the Holy Spirit. In mystical parlance, you must tame the Green Lion before you can give it wings.

The most remarkable thing about Father Merton's book is its sense of balance, so characteristic of the spiritual writings of Catholic saints. When one is a true mystic, one is no longer afraid of reason; on the contrary, one realizes the important function that reason performs in the whole of the spiritual life. Reason fulfills a negative function in an active way, while contemplation fulfills a positive function in a passive way. Both the negative and positive, the active and the passive, are equally indispensable to spiritual perfection, which is a joint enterprise between God and ourselves, between grace and nature. It takes the spring and the fall to make a whole year.

The Ascent to Truth cannot be gulped down at one sitting. Like Chinese rice wine, it should be taken sip by sip. It must not be inferred from the above that Father Merton is getting pedantic. His is a learned book, but not a pedantic one. It is one of the two best introductions this reviewer knows to the mysticism of Saint John of the Cross, the other being Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen's *Saint John of the Cross: Doctor of Divine Love and Contemplation* (Mercier Press). Every lay-

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man of normal intelligence can read it with profit; he will realize how infinitely rich is the heritage of a Christian. Not the least attractive part of the book is the Biographical Notes of Saints Gregory of Nyssa, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Blessed John Ruysbroeck, Saints Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Blaise Pascal, and John of St. Thomas.

I have heard someone call Father Merton an "escapist." But the fact is that he is so far from being an escapist that he is one of a few contemporaries whose love emboldens them to look reality squarely in the face.

JOHN C. H. WU.

The Grass Harp. Truman Capote. Random House. $2.75.

THERE is pleasure in reporting how very fine Truman Capote's second novel is, how admirably and even brilliantly *accomplished* — instinct with vitality and humor and a tenderness which never curdles into sentimentality. One's pleasure in this case has little to do with literary actualities: it rises, rather, from satisfaction at the confirmation of a talent.

When *Other Voices, Other Rooms* appeared three years ago, there was, dimly discernible beneath its layers of fashionable decay, a novelist of substance and distinction, with a mind and sensibility characteristically his own. But from the first, Capote seemed in bondage to a public myth of himself—an image of the Writer as Exotic—which was apparently the distasteful construction of his publishers and the fashion magazines. No artist can survive such a commitment, and it is to Capote's credit that he has negotiated a successful escape. *The Grass Harp* represents his first serious experiment in major fiction.

The point of departure here is, again, a private world, and the author notes, "all private worlds are good; they are never vulgar places." To a tree house—"a raft floating in a sea of leaves"—come the three inhabitants who make up this world: Collin Fenwick, the orphaned boy who acts as narrator; his aunt, Miss Dolly, whose fragile presence is like "a delicate happening," and Catherine Creek, her Negro-Indian friend. In flight from Dolly's militant sister Verena, they are joined by Judge Charlie Cool, one of those spirits who accept life, who "grant its differences—and consequently are always in trouble," and Riley Henderson, an inexplicably wild young friend of Collin's.

What starts as a rebellion for these five ends as an initiation into love. For like Dolly, who "looked around her and felt what she saw," they learn that life, after all, is a question of love, and that love must begin with the smallest things. "A leaf, a handful of seed—begin with these, learn a little what it is to love. First, a leaf, a fall of rain, then someone to receive what a leaf has taught you, what a fall of rain has ripened. No easy process, understand; it could take a lifetime. . . . I only know how true it is: that love

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is a chain of love, as nature is a chain of life."

Within the slim compass of this work, Truman Capote has achieved a masterpiece of passionate simplicity, of direct, intuitive observation. Without any loss of intensity, he has purified the clotted prose of *Other Voices, Other Rooms,* producing a luminous reflector for his unique visual sensibility: "On the skyline three morning stars swooned in the flush of an arriving sun; dew tinseled the leaves, a jet chain of blackbirds swung out to meet the mounting light." But the real wonder of *The Grass Harp* —the major advance over the earlier novel—is revealed in its awareness of a larger reality. Capote has sunk a shaft more deeply into human experience, and his vision now encompasses greater variety and flexibility.

He still deals in eccentrics but his characters are not wrenched out of their human context; in them, eccentricity becomes an extension, not a distortion, of personality. Compassion, too—that abused quality—takes on a new depth here; it is the authentic coin of the heart and must not be too easily spent. He has constructed a private world, but it is one with roots in the common soil of our common experience, and that is the measure of his achievement. *The Grass Harp* is a public act of responsibility and love.

RICHARD HAYES.

A Sleep of Prisoners. Christopher Fry. Oxford. $2.

THERE is a popular conception about that Christopher Fry has two moods as a dramatist—a secular and religious mood. To accept this dichotomy is to misunderstand the nature of his art. For Fry, growth of vision means progress, reality. Yet although *Venus Observed* was written for the commercial stage and *A Sleep of Prisoners* for the Society of Religious Drama, for presentation in churches, there is no fundamental difference between the plays: what difference there is lies in the plot, not the intention. For in both—as in all the Fry canon—the intention is through the wonder of words to reveal the wonder of the Word. Wake up in bed; reach for the lamp; turn on the light. Then look at your hand: for a moment view it objectively—as one can at such moments. In it you will see the wonder of the Word incarnate, a work of art far greater than *Hamlet.*

In *A Sleep of Prisoners* Fry attempts another variation on this theme. His soldiers—prisoners of war—talk endlessly; when they are awake they speak for themselves; when they are asleep in their dreams they speak as at heart they are, not as they believe themselves to be. By this means, Fry is able to relate the past to the present; to re-tell by such devices as sleep-walking-and-talking, the stories of Cain and Abel, David and Absalom, Abraham and Isaac. Murder is seen as both a Biblical and modern problem, the answer to which can only be found if men will grow in vision.

It will be seen that the play is not an easy one of which to provide a synopsis and it is obvious that the same difficulty confronted the publishers when they came to their writing of the 'blurb.' In church the same problem faces the audience. It is simple to form a main impression and to understand how the Biblical and modern time-sequences interlock, but again it is not always easy to follow the underlying and interlocking arguments. There is a breakdown of explicitness, since it may well be that in bringing drama back to the church Fry feared lest his work might be dogmatic and hence avoided anything which might savor of over-simplification.

"The Church knows all the an-answers" is an attitude which a dramatist (if he is to remain an artist) cannot adopt: the answers must be the corollaries of statements

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which are dramatic, not dogmatic. So it is that *A Sleep of Prisoners* is essentially an experiment in drama, an interim work: it is not so much a change of direction as a development and like all Fry's plays, after the performance is over or the script has been closed, lines echo in the memory.

Show me an ending great
enough
To hold the passion of this beginning
And raise me to it

are some such lines.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE.

Mr. Beluncle. V. S. Pritchett. Harcourt, Brace. $3.50.

ENGLAND is a country in which a man who is an editor of a left-wing political journal and a fairly heavyweight literary critic, besides, will write a book like this *Mr. Beluncle,* which is a stroke of pure, detached foolery, nothing more. It would hardly happen here, or indeed anywhere else. If Pritchett intended his satire to have other than very incidental political or economic implications, he has failed. But I don't believe he intended anything in particular: he was just having fun.

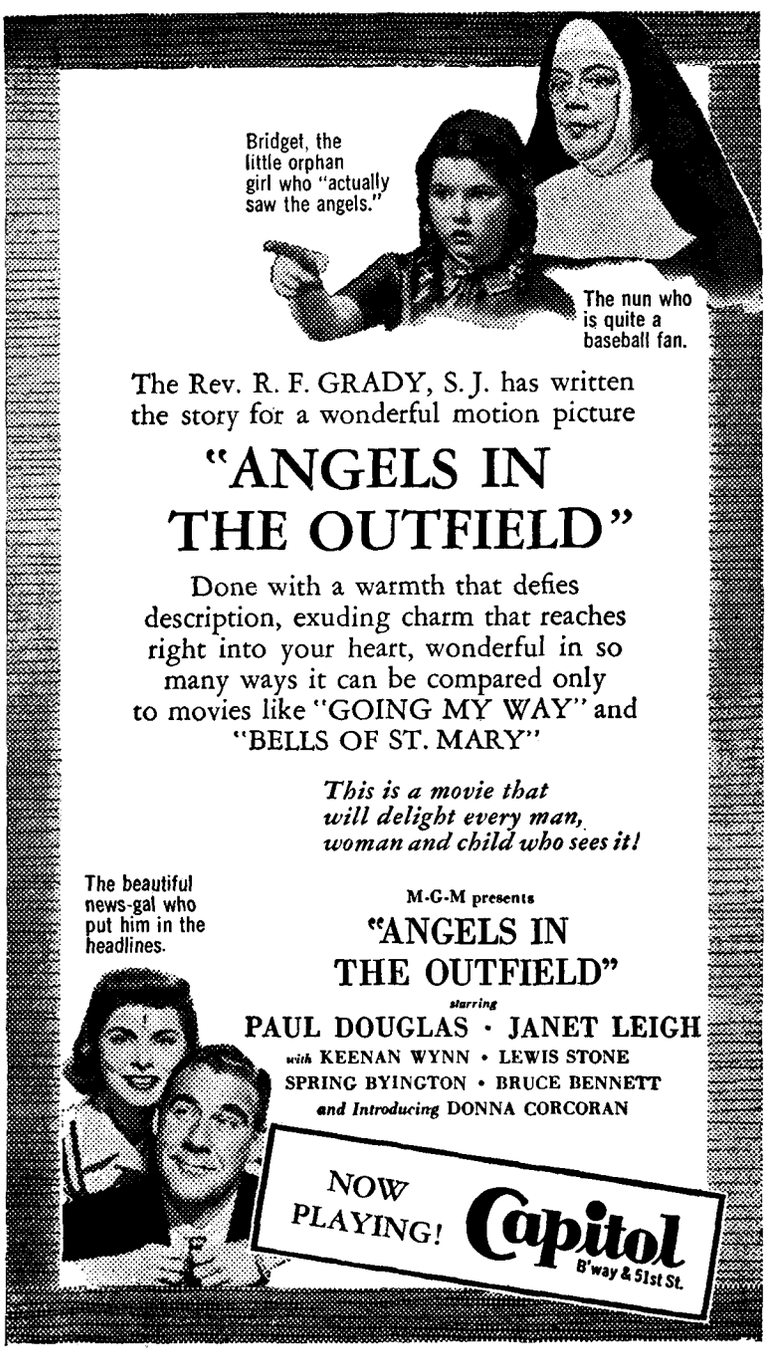
How much of the fun will be shared by American readers is a matter for curiosity. The humor of *Mr. Beluncle* is of a highly special British order, and at times even more private than that; so it is likely that some will find it only boring or vexatious. Whoever had to write the description of the book which appears on its dust jacket was clearly stumped by the task—I certainly am. What plot there is centers around Mr. Beluncle's eccentric family and equally eccentric associates in business and in the Purification, a New Thought cult (All is Mind, etc.) whose activities provide the book's most entertaining substance. It is a vein that has been worked before; and as portraiture Mr. B and his co-religionist Lady Roads, though more subtly conceived, lack the sharpness of Huxley's Barbecue-Smith and Waugh's Mrs. Ape.

Still, Pritchett has quite a turn for sly caricature, and for mandarin-style verbal brilliance. It's unfortunate the story is too diffuse, the fun will never quite focus. But when you look at the author's picture, the mournful, intellectual, very British face (say a blend of Virginia Woolf and J. Middleton Murry), and think of his position on the earnest and frequently distressed *New Statesman and Nation,* and then of this wacky *Mr. Beluncle* — you feel a kind of affectionate admiration that would say: Go it, old boy. Go it.

PAUL DINKINS.

Where Nests the Water Hen. Gabrielle Roy. Translated by Harry L. Binsse. Harcourt, Brace. $3.

THE interior of Manitoba is, I suppose, on the direct bomb route from Moscow. Under that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perilous air lies the Water Hen country, so named "in honor of its senior inhabitant, that small gray fowl which epitomizes all its tedium and all its quietness." And through that country we come, under the knowing guidance of Gabrielle Roy, a native Manitoban, to forget both perilous air and bombs. That is not to say that this novel that reads like nonfiction counsels escape from reality; rather it leads us, most agreeably, into the presence of some basic realities that, in the face of the strident ones, we sometimes forget.

One of them is Luzina Tousignant, French-Canadian mother and wife, a water hen herself, who peoples the wilderness with a brood of children, to whom — the better to vanquish the solitude—she assigns a whole litany of names. She bears the children; then she educates them, or rather makes it possible for them to secure in the wilderness the beginnings of an education that, in time, carries them away from her. But, a true builder of nations, she is at bottom glad, for each has his task in life: "to the teacher, the explaining; to the children, the learning; and to her, Luzina, the serving of them all" —including God, whom—like Péguy —she thinks of as an old man "knowing almost all languages, a great Latin scholar, a mighty traveler . . . now aged and doubtless tired, yet, precisely because he is beyond petty things, little skilled at dealing with them."

The other great reality here is an old Capuchin priest—Luzina's prototype for God—born in eastern Europe, speaking twenty languages (and needing them for his few hundred scattered parishioners), establishing his chapel in a field of wild mustard, preaching always essentially one sermon of love, feeling the weight of evil, yet in the confessional ever being struck by the enormous good will of souls.

In this her second novel Gabrielle Roy has turned from the crowded Saint-Henri quarter of Montreal (*The Tin Flute*) to one of the world's least peopled regions. In such a region, as in this book, character is everything. Here it is warm, human, endearing, and fundamental. While it is such, either in art or in life, the perilous air and the bombs signify nothing.

The translation is excellent.

ROBERT WICHERT.

Men I Hold Great. François Mauriac. Philosophical Library. $3.

DESPITE its appearance in a translation sometimes timid, sometimes desperate, hence commonly opaque, and despite the unsettling sympathies which this book, being a work of judgment, frequently exacts, few who hold French literature great will fail to find in François Mauriac's *Men I Hold Great* a genuine treasure, and to acknowledge that this treasure enriches France by helping indeed "to maintain her in the first ranks of the nations who know man best."

M. Mauriac's book is a study of man. But it is not a system; it is an unblinking examination of selected individuals, all with particularities that escape the systems and must profoundly disturb those who know only by systems. M. Mauriac's is the warm and anxious intuition of the concrete which is Pascal's; and Pascal begins and presides over the book.

M. Mauriac examines his patients (no, he is not clinical; the clinician has no passionate, life-long acquaintance with those in the queue) as a dogmatic theologian, only thus escaping the sheer moralist's disgust and despair. At the same time he is the sympathetic novelist, and though "the modern era rests altogether on Rousseau's falsehood," still "nothing resembles us (including Rousseau) less than our own acts."

Mauriac the psychologist is French, not Viennese, and as great men to study he selects conscious communicators. What he reveals is all the more deeply disquieting. The Great Men have accompanied us to the brink of the abyss, led us to the age that "respects sepulchers no more than cradles," where we stagger because "drunk with the most bitter knowledge."

Merciless though the probe is that in this book gets deeply at that

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knowledge of good and evil, the prober himself is deeply merciful. These studies—from Pascal and Voltaire to Gide and Graham Greene—are thus, though shocking, a wholesome (and not immediately exhaustible) experience.

WILLIAM J. KERRIGAN.

Days of a Hireling. John Gilland Brunini. Lippincott. $3.

THE author has taken the title of this book from Job, the man of many miseries and much patience: "Man's life on earth is a warfare and his days as the days of a hireling." The man in this case, Hilary Debevoise, is a sensitive, intellectual Catholic with a very active, not to say acute, conscience. He is the business manager of a Catholic weekly run by laymen in the interest of their religion, though not necessarily of their co-religionists. It is a difficult, poorly paying job and Mr. Brunini is well-informed about its personal and financial drawbacks. Naturally for a man of such high calibre as Hilary Debevoise there are compensations but they are not spectacular. Neither is his personal life, which has its shining but also its sordid moments, more of the latter probably than the former.

Three women play a part in the life of Hilary Debevoise. One of them he marries, only to be subsequently divorced, which means, of course, many complications for the conscientious Catholic. Talking to a clerical friend at one point, he declares: "I have taken little pleasure and no joy in my sins." It must be admitted that the same is true for Mr. Brunini's readers, for Hilary Debevoise does not sin bravely.

Someone has said of Shakespeare that he was the only man who could portray a bore without himself being boring, but that even he came very close to that unpleasant position in Juliet's nurse. Well, Mr. Brunini is no Shakespeare and he does depict all too faithfully the days of a hireling, whose lot is not a happy one.

In Hilary Debevoise the author does show something more important

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than any earthly satisfaction. It is the reward of the spiritual man who can keep alight in his heart and mind the spirit that gives point and purpose to the days of a hireling. Hilary Debevoise in that respect is a clear figure, placed against the cluttered and uninspired environment that Mr. Brunini describes.

NORAH MEADE CORCORAN.

Praying While You Work—Devotions for the Use of Martha Rather than Mary. Hubert van Zeller. Templegate (Springfield, Ill.). $2.

THE two methods which Dom van Zeller advocates are to pray before each daily task and to make a spiritual thing out of our work itself. He favors the practice of both methods but lays greater stress on the second. The first half of this brief volume discusses these methods and applies them to various duties and situations in the daily round. The latter half includes a series of brief prayers for all occasions and circumstances.

Among such occasions are: Before Giving a Party; When Made a Fool Of; Before Receiving a Difficult Guest; When Exhausted by Housework, etc.

What Catholics Believe. Joseph Pieper and Heinz Raskop. Pantheon. $2.

A BRIEF, straightforward handbook based on the Apostles Creed, the Sacraments, the Christian virtues, the Bible and the history of the Church. The tone is simple and expository rather than argumentative.

Here is a characteristic excerpt: "The central purpose of this life is that, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we allow the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of the Son to become fruitful and complete in us. The life of the Christian is participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity. This share in the life of the Trinity is what we call *sanctifying grace,* a term frequently misunderstood but having no other meaning than this—the life of God as shared by us. . . ."

• REVIEWERS •

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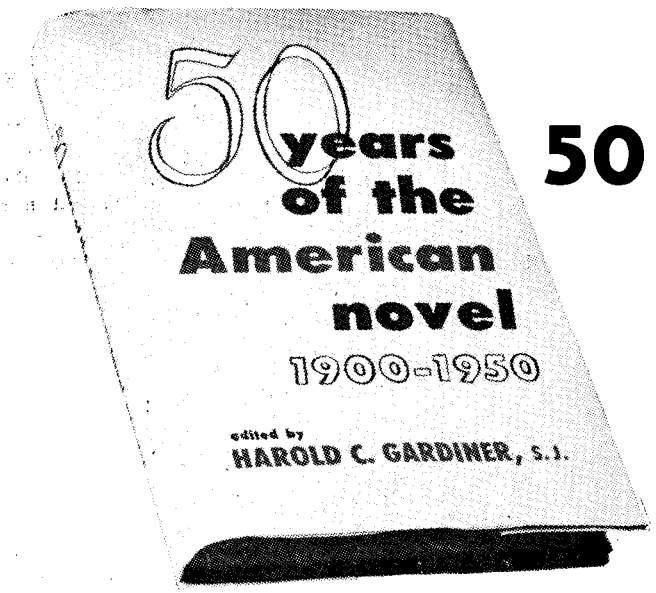

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